

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY

G/PM

SECRETMEMORANDUMSUBJECT: The Khrushchev
Tradeoff

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY <i>[Signature]</i>
October 27, 1962
RDG/for XDS/EXT. DATE
TS AUTH.
ENCLOSURE <i>[initials]</i>
Proposed for Turkey-Cuba
DECLASSIFIED <i>[initials]</i>
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Khrushchev now recognizes that his position is weak. The whole Soviet play with Cuban missile sites was probably based on a three-level course of action.

First, the Soviets hoped for, and probably expected, US acquiescence in the buildup of a Soviet missile complex in Cuba which would substantially augment Soviet strength in negotiations over Berlin, and in general. The appreciable military gain, while not seriously affecting the strategic military balance, could have been converted into a high card at the negotiation table.

Second, as a first-line fallback position, the Soviets could react to a US blockade or similar pressure short of direct military invasion or attack on the bases by proposing a trade of the Turkish, Italian, and UK IRBMs for those in Cuba. It is the lower end of this range of action to which the Soviets have now fallen back.

Third, at worst, the Soviets would react to US military action against the bases by whatever forms of political protest were warranted by world reactions--even up to breaking diplomatic relations. The Khrushchev message of October 27 strengthens the conclusion that the USSR would not resort to direct military confrontation or reprisal--on the seas, in Cuba, or in Turkey. To date, the world reactions have not been what Moscow had hoped for; in particular, the unanimous OAS action must have been a severe disappointment.

The third course is still the remaining Soviet recourse if we reject their offer at the second level. The Soviet statement clearly evades any commitment to military action if the US should decline its offer and eliminate the missile site by unilateral military action. It states that the missiles in Cuba are in Soviet hands and would be used only if there were (a) an invasion of Cuba, or (b) an attack on the Soviet Union or any of her allies. It can scarcely be an oversight that the contingency of a strike to neutralize the missiles is not included in this commitment. The Soviets can probably still be compelled to withdraw the missile bases if they see the only alternative will be our destruction of them. However, even that outcome would almost certainly not provoke even limited Soviet military escalation.

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The Turks have already made abundantly clear that they do not want to be compared with the Cubans, used as a pawn, or shorn of the Jupiters which have always been to them a proud symbol of their ability to strike back if they are hit. Hasty surfacing of long-held US military evaluations of the obsolescence of the Jupiters would be ineffective in meeting these strongly held views. The Jupiters are not important as a military-strategic asset--but, then, neither is Berlin. Yet both have elemental significance as symbols of the integrity of the Alliance and especially of our commitment to stand by the interests of each of its members.

The United States can, while solving the Cuban base question with determination, forcefully reaffirm its readiness to reach agreements on arms control and disarmament. We could thus indicate our pursuit of peace at the same time that we disposed of the latest Soviet disruption of the peace.

The United States has a unique opportunity to deal a major setback to the Soviet leaders, and once and for all to disabuse them--and others--of any illusion that the alternative to any Soviet gamble for high stakes will be not fallback advantages, but a defeat. Precisely such an outcome is the way to discourage such ventures in the future.

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